



Features

Karrie Webb - I'm not done yet!

Karrie Webb, preparing for the 2012 season - interview conducted by Paul Prendergast

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Ball after ball, hour after hour, Karrie Webb toiled away in growing heat on the range at Brookwater Golf and Country Club under the watchful eye of her long-time mentor, Ian Triggs. After a session that lasted the length of a round of golf, it was off to the practice green to work on her putting for over an hour.

This was Webb's first session of the year in early January as she prepared for her 17th season on the LPGA Tour. She was back a few days later, this time starting what was to be a 5 hour session at noon in the blazing Queensland sun. It's a remarkable insight into the work ethic and dedication of the woman who has won 7 Major Championships, over 50 tournaments around the world since turning professional in 1994 and was elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame only 11 years later.



Photocredit: Mark Wilson - Interview: Paul Prendergast - follow him on twitter @paulprendo

'Amazing lady' said Triggs. 'She's always done this (worked hard).'

After her off season break where she admits to doing 'nothing', the good news for her fans all around the world is that Webb is as hungry as ever to improve and compete at the highest level against the growing wave of talent on Tour. 'I've been back in Australia since just before Xmas. When I was back in the States, I did some off season workouts but not a lot of practice.'

'I always try to get away from the game. I hit balls about once a week, to stay in touch with it so I don't start (working for) the season with 'Triggsy' with the game that foreign to me.' Webb said. 'I spend time back in North Queensland and have tried to moreso over the last 6 or 7 years. Both my sisters have kids now so I want to make sure they know who I am.'

Without anywhere near the fanfare that surrounded Tiger Woods' major swing changes, Webb has embarked on a similar campaign to improve not only her golf swing but changes in her body to support the vision that she and Triggs have for her game into the future.

'I've been working on my fitness for the last 10 years and lately, I've been working on the weaknesses so that with the changes I'm trying to work on in my swing now, the body is stable enough to do it. It may not look it but we've made some significant changes in my swing. We started that in late October last year because I felt that even though I won twice, it was probably the poorest ball striking year of my career.'

'I'd gotten into some bad habits which you don't see until it's too far gone, so we thought we'd see most of the year out then make the changes before I started doing a lot of work in January (for the new season).'

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'Look, I'll take two wins every year. I had a good US Open, one of my better US Opens in a while, but I was disappointed with my play at the Evian Masters and the British Open and through August and September I didn't play very well. I saw Triggssy in October in Korea and that's when we made the changes. Earlier on in the year, I wasn't swinging it as bad as it got in August but I was able to manage how I was swinging it and my putting and short game was really good.'

Asked to elaborate on what some of the changes are brought a broad grin to Webb's face. 'I don't know if you have enough tape!' she laughed. 'Lots of little things, some things I haven't ever done in my life before. It's only early days so it's going to be a work in progress. I'd love to tell you that at the Australian Open, they'll be firing at 100% but I'd like by the time we get back to mainland US to really be firing by then.'

Looking forward to the Australian Open on the Composite Course at Royal Melbourne, Webb said that she was fired up and 'a little bit scared after watching the Presidents Cup' to have the opportunity to contest an event of this stature on the storied layout. 'I hope it's a bit softer for us than it was for the Presidents Cup but no matter how they set it up, the first tournament for two and a half months will make it a challenge for me.'

'I haven't played there since I was an amateur. My first Australian Amateur was there in '91 and I played there again in about 2003 or 2004. I've told girls (on the LPGA Tour) to come over and play it because they just won't play many quality courses like that for the rest of their career.'

'The ones I've spoken to are really excited and if they didn't know much about Royal Melbourne before, the Presidents Cup made them sit up and take notice. To play the Composite Course too, I'm not sure if there's been a women's event held there before or not. I've played there on the West or the East but never the Composite.'

'To win a 5th Australian Open there would definitely rate up there pretty highly. To win at quality golf courses, like I did at Kingston Heath and Royal Sydney, it gives you that extra satisfaction I think.'

'Yani Tseng will obviously be the favourite, after last year she used to winning probably every 2nd event she plays. If it doesn't come as fast for her this year, she might feel she needs to press a bit but I don't see why she wouldn't win at least 4 or 5 times again this year.'

Webb's pursuit of further goals as she heads to the 'back nine' of her career have lead her to make some difficult but necessary changes to her early season schedule this year, to enable her to be fresh for the season's first Major Championship at the Kraft Nabisco Championship in late March. 'I'm closer to the end of my career than at the start so I don't want to waste those opportunities,' she said.

Webb took the tough decision to skip one of the events for which she has become famous for in Australia, the RACV Ladies Masters on the Gold Coast. Webb has triumphed seven times and been the headline act on the 20 occasions she has teed up in the event. 'It's disappointing to miss the RACV Ladies Masters but it's all around the scheduling. My body doesn't love 4 tournaments in a row and last year, I played 4 in a row, had a couple of weeks off then played 3 in a row.'

'By the time I got to Nabisco, I was exhausted and I don't have too many more of those (the Majors) left. I want to make the most of those opportunities.'

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'I played (the Masters) 19 years in a row so it will be weird for me not to be there but the impact of four in a row on my body just doesn't make any sense.'

'I'm also defending at two of those first few events (in Singapore and Phoenix) so they will be busy weeks. Apart from the tournaments, there's a lot of travelling and time zone changes at the start of the year so I want to be fresh for the first Major of the year.'

The evidence of her desire to continue to be a dominant force in the game certainly shone through when talking to Webb and also Triggs. There was a quiet determination and confidence in her voice when talking about the future and a chance to continue to build on her already lofty stature in the sport.

'I'd love to think that I've got another good run of a few years yet, where I'm one of the top handful of players in the world consistently. I think I can do that on any given week but it's about doing it consistently, where my name is on the leaderboard and that if people know it's there, that it's not going to go away.'

'If I can get these changes sorted and then learn to trust them on the golf course, I really believe I can have that run or I wouldn't be playing. I'm going to work hard to try to achieve that.'

Paul Prendergast

January 2012

Quote: Karrie Webb:

'I'd love to think that I've got another good run of a few years yet'

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